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SILK RUG (SO-CALLED POLONAISE)
PERSIAN, SAFAVID DYNASTY
EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY
Gift of Edsel B. Ford, 1942

A PERSIAN SILK RUG

THE ART of rug-knotting reached its utmost height during the reign of the Safavid dynasty. Perfection of technique, together with the greatest splendor of material and dyes, inspired the designers, who were often famous painters working at royal academies. In these halcyon days great value was attached to the creation of a perfect rug, for the absence of other furniture centered attention on the floor covering.

The period of Shah Abbas (1587-1629) introduced a new type of rug which remained in fashion during the reigns of his son and grandson. These rugs differ from all others mainly in their color scheme, for instead of strong reds and blues, the colors predominating are delicate pinks and greens, silvery greys and golden hues ranging from palest lemon to reddish amber. At first these rugs seem to have been woven entirely of silk, with an unusually long nap, but soon actual metal thread, silver and silver gilt, was brocaded in between the silk pile, as part of the design or for the ground.

Edsel B. Ford has added to his former gifts of important Persian and Indian rugs a rug woven entirely of silk, of the early seventeenth century.¹ Its great beauty and unusual size, an almost perfect square, give new interest to the Islamic galleries. On a Nile green field the fundamental units of Persian art, the arabesque, the palmette and the lancet leaf, interspersed with four-petalled blossoms and cloudbands, combine to form a clear and relatively simple design, as required by the material, for the long pile of lustrous silk might confuse a more elaborate pattern. The border shows a floral arabesque with alternating palmettes, the guard bands have an interlocked palmette and a four-petalled flower, all on an ivory ground. The colors of the design range through many shades of silver and gold, with strong accents of carnelian red and dark green.

A freakish name has become attached to these rugs. A group of such, from the collection of Prince Czartoryski, was exhibited in Paris in 1878, as the work of Polish weavers. Although this theory was speedily and independently disproved by the greatest authorities on oriental rugs, Riegl, Bode and Martin, the label "Polish rug" or "Polonaise" seems destined to live on as a time-honored cliché. Such "Polish" rugs have been preserved in old collections not only in Poland, but also in many other countries, often traceable to gifts from eastern potentates. The earliest known example figures in a painting by Gabriele Caliari in the ducal palace at Venice. It records the reception of the Persian embassy which brought gifts from Shah Abbas to the Doge Grimani in 1603. The actual rug is preserved in the civic museum of Venice; other similar rugs, brought from Persia by succeeding embassies in 1613 and 1622, are preserved in the treasury of Saint Mark's. Altogether about three hundred "Polish" rugs are still in existence and many of these have now found a place in American museums and private collections.

While the majority of them seems to have come to European countries at an early time, there are at least two groups preserved in Eastern sanctuaries. Four complete and three fragmentary rugs have been discovered in the shrine of Imam Ali at Al-Najaf in Iraq.² Two of these are inscribed "Donated by the dog of this

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shrine, Abbas." This is Shah Abbas I who elsewhere calls himself "the dog of Ali" as a token of his devotion to the last orthodox caliph. The design of these rugs is of the early type of those at Saint Mark's. The second group is the set preserved in the Mausoleum of Shah Abbas II (1642-1667) at Kum.³ One of these rugs is inscribed "The work of the master Nimat Allah Jushagani in the year 1082," a date corresponding to A.D. 1661. The design is an elaboration of contemporary floral velvets.

These silk rugs stand apart as a last, somewhat effete, manifestation of Persia's greatest craft. At their best they are superlatively beautiful. They brought to the Western world a whisper of a civilization of greater refinement than its own and prepared it for the joyous moment when it became acquainted with the tales of the Thousand and One Nights.

ADELE COULIN WEIBEL

¹Accession Number: 42.130. Height: 10 feet, 9½ inches; Width: 11 feet, 1 inch.

²Mehmet Aga-Oglu; *Safavid Rugs and Textiles, the Collection of the Shrine of Imam Ali at Al-Najaf*, New York, 1941, pp. 8-16, plates 1-6.

³Arthur Upham Pope, "The Art of Carpet Making" in *A Survey of Persian Art*, London and New York, 1939, Vol. III, pp. 2389 ff.; Vol. VI, plates 1258-1260.

TWO WOOD SCULPTURES OF THE LATE GOTHIC BAROQUE

AMONG the generous gifts which Mrs. Ralph Harman Booth has recently presented to the Art Institute in memory of her husband, is a statue of the *Mourning Virgin*,¹ a South German work of the early sixteenth century, carved in wood, slightly under life-size. It originally formed the companion piece to a *St. John*² given to the Museum some years ago by Mr. Booth. The two statues, which once stood at the sides of a Crucifix that is now lost, are works of deeply emotional quality and remarkably skillful execution. With astonishing ability the artist has produced a work of art full of vitality out of a dead piece of wood by the simple use of a knife without destroying the character of the soft yet knotty material which communicates its own warmth of feeling and ruggedness to the artist's effort.

In recent years the study of South German sculpture of the period of our statues has proved that the great Bavarian master Hans Leinberger, to whom they were attributed, was not the only one to work in this style. A whole group of sculptors produced work of similar high quality, notably Georg Lederer, the leading artist of the Allgau (at the foot of the Alps, east of Lake Constance), whose works are closely related to these two statues. But more important than the question of the individual artist is the fact that they are characteristic examples of the "late Gothic Baroque" which ruled the art of the Northern countries, especially of Germany and the Netherlands in the early sixteenth century, and expressed the spirit of the Reformation and its accompanying social and political revolution.

No greater contrast could be imagined than that between this style and the contemporary High Renaissance of Italy where the sculptor's material is not wood but cold marble. While the Italian artist is more interested in depicting the beautiful forms of the human body, even though it may be covered by drapery, and characteristically strives for a carefully balanced composition and restrained expression, the Northern artist entirely subordinates bodily beauty and logical construction to the expression of emotion which emanates from the head of the statue yet



MOURNING VIRGIN (DETAIL)
 SOUTH GERMAN, EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY
*Gift of Mrs. Ralph Harman Booth,
 in memory of her husband, Ralph Harman Booth, 1942*

penetrates with equal force every part of the body. We feel the sorrowful sentiment pictured in St. John's face, shaking his body and trembling in restless curves along the edges of his mantle. We understand better the stiff upright attitude of the Virgin and her staring eyes when we observe how the recurrent waves of her draperies result from the suppressed choking effort to retain her dignity notwithstanding her pain. In Italian sculpture of this time, the expression of the face is usually indifferent. Here it is the key to the composition.

In representing themes which demand a symmetrical composition by the nature of the subject, such as the Crucifixion with St. John and the Virgin, the Italian artist aims at balanced attitudes, relating the figures in line and contra-



ST. JOHN (DETAIL)
SOUTH GERMAN, EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Gift of Ralph Harman Booth, 1926

position one to another and to the Crucified. Our sculptor avoids such an outer relationship. St. John and the Virgin are not concerned with one another. Each is unable to help or even to think of the other equal sufferer standing beside him. St. John clasping his hands in despair, the Virgin hiding her face under the veil, are not turned toward each other; they bespeak complete loneliness amidst the diabolical crowd which we are to imagine as surrounding the Crucified.

The style of the figures is a late Gothic Expressionism which created some of the greatest works of German art between 1500 and 1530, as Grünewald's Isenheim altar, Dürer's *Four Apostles*, the sculptures of Veit Stoss and Hans Leinberger. It is the continuation of the fifteenth century movement of line marked by its breaking up of the body structure, its pictorial treatment using strong contrasts

of light and shadow as a means to bring out mystical emotions. This style of the new century is, however, different from the last phase of fifteenth century art, inasmuch as the exaggerated linear rhythm produces forms similar to those of the Baroque style of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While the figures themselves are comparatively static, it is as if a storm of wind suddenly ruffles their garments and short horizontal waves interfere with the flowing parallel vertical lines, expressing the restlessness and instability of this epoch. Such unexpected recurrent waves occur in the lower part of the St. John and in the Virgin's drapery. At the same time it can be observed that there is a greater solidity in the bodies than in the dissolving forms of the sculpture in the eighties and nineties of the fifteenth century, an increase of bodily structure—noticeable for instance in the protruding knees of our statues—which parallels the tendency towards full opulent forms in the sculpture of the Italian High Renaissance.

How closely this style is related to the Baroque can be proved by the fact that the Baroque masters of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were very fond of this sculpture. They not only frequently built the figures of this early period into their altars (where they have often been mistaken for Baroque sculpture) but even copied them, as we know from an eighteenth century copy of Leinberger's famous *Ecce Homo* in the Berlin Museum. Since in German and Netherlandish art the early Baroque develops directly from the late Gothic without essential interference from the Southern Renaissance, it is more appropriate to speak of this style as the Late Gothic Baroque, than to call it the Northern Renaissance, as is usually done.

W. R. VALENTINER

¹Accession Number: 43.3. Wood, originally polychromed. Height: 53 inches. Collection: Luigi Bellini, Florence. Gift of Mrs. Ralph Harman Booth, in memory of her husband, Ralph Harman Booth, 1942.

²Accession Number: 26.14. Wood, originally polychromed. Height: 52¾ inches. Collection: Luigi Bellini, Florence. Gift of Ralph Harman Booth, 1926. W. R. Valentiner in *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts*, Vol. VII, No. 6, March, 1926, pp. 68-69, where both statues are illustrated full-length.

A SEAPORT AT SUNSET BY CLAUDE LORRAIN

THE MUSEUM has had the good fortune to acquire, as a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb, a marine painting by the great landscape painter Claude Lorrain, of a type not represented before. It is a *Seaport at Sunset*, signed and dated 1643, of relatively small size and painted on copper. It is to our knowledge the first of Claude's rather rare pictures on copper to come to this country and has the additional interest to the devotees of Claude that it comes from the Barberini Collection.¹

Claude, who was born in 1600, was an artist of slow development. Although he eventually achieved a world-wide fame, full recognition did not come to him until the great Barberini pope, Urban VIII, commissioned a pair of pictures, a landscape and a marine, in Claude's thirty-ninth year. These two paintings later passed into the possession of King Louis XIV of France and are now among the masterpieces of the Louvre. Our smaller and more intimate painting, which still has the Barberini seals on the back, was painted four years later and remained in the possession of the family for nearly three centuries until it was sold a few years ago to the art dealer from whom we acquired it. In spite of this history it seems to have escaped the notice of most students and is not mentioned in any recent work on Claude since Mrs. Pattison's book of 1884.



SEAPORT AT SUNSET
BY CLAUDE LORRAIN, FRENCH, 1600-1682
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb, 1942

The sea, or more properly speaking, the harbors and seacoast near Rome were a very important element in Claude Lorrain's feeling for nature. To his delight in the sight of the sun sinking in a golden glow to the horizon and silhouetting the ships in harbor and the seamen on the quay, or in the more distant views of the Mediterranean across the Campagna, we owe many of his most famous and beautiful works. In the *Seaport at Sunset* of 1639 in the Louvre Claude created the type of marine which the thought of him brings automatically to mind. The marines of this kind may be described as Claude's reconstructions of the ancient world whose ruins still met his eye everywhere as he wandered through the solitudes of the landscape about Rome. In his imagination he liked to reconstruct the splendors of antiquity in harbor scenes crowded with ships, with temples and triumphal arches and palaces rising from the water's edge in heroic pomp and splendor, all suffused in the light of the setting sun. They are of course not dryly archaeological reconstructions but poetic reveries in which the beautiful effects of nature are mingled with an ideal classical world.

But there is another less familiar type of harbor scene in which Claude simply represented the beauty of the landscape of his own day. The marines of this class are less heroic in tone than the others and more realistic in setting. Antiquity is still present in them but as Claude actually knew it in the form of a ruined colonnade or a crumbling tower looking down upon the half deserted coast of the seventeenth century. There are many such scenes among his etchings

but there are also some few oil paintings, notably in the museums of Berlin and Grenoble and at Windsor Castle; and now the newly acquired picture in Detroit takes its place among them. The Detroit picture is the only one of small size; the others are all on canvas and of Claude's usual dimensions.

The canvas in Berlin, called there *Italian Coast in the Morning Light with a Girl Seated Listening to a Flute Player*, painted in 1642, is very closely related to our picture but slightly more idyllic in feeling because of the figures in the foreground. The group of trees at the left in each picture and the round tower and colonnade over which the slanting sunlight falls so beautifully, are in fact variations of the same theme. In the Detroit picture, however, all is brought closer to the observer, the quay-side is crowded with activity and nearby in the harbor is a ship at anchor and two lateen-rigged caravels.² The combination of the bold swelling forms of the hulls and the intricate delicacy of the rigging lent a beauty of form to these sailing ships which Claude appreciated at their full value.

The Detroit *Seaport* is in a warm color harmony of brown, green and gold, to which the reddish browns of the dockside costume add an earthy note characteristic of many of Claude's color schemes of the 1640's. The small size and the fact that it is painted on copper give this picture the appearance of a somewhat earlier work than it actually is, an impression strengthened by the way the dome-like masses of the trees still recall the style of the earlier landscapes by Elsheimer and Paul Bril whose influence is strong in many of Claude's youthful works. The difference between this and the marine of 1642 shows what an alteration scale and material—copper or canvas—make in an artist's manner.

Claude's art is essentially an art of memory. His sketches show that he studied nature constantly and with the keenest delight. But his pictures are images of the beauty of nature, of earth and air, sunlight and the grave serenity of the Roman landscape, as they have been distilled by memory and translated into the timeless harmonies of art. It is thus very characteristic of him to repeat certain motives like the sunlight falling on a ruined column or a round tower in slightly different form in several compositions. There are many such themes—some phase of nature that he was particularly fond of—that run like a recurrent melody sometimes through many years of his activity. But each composition varies not only in detail but in tone. The figures in the foreground and the sharply observed ships lend a lively reality to our picture different from the idyllic tone of the Berlin painting. And the open green space beneath the trees where the cattle graze on the farther bank, is a kind of invitation to the spectator to stroll there in his imagination and enjoy the beauty of the evening. But over all is the air of clarity and softness, the tone of grandeur, simplicity and timeless tranquility that is the hallmark of Claude's art.

E. P. RICHARDSON.

¹Accession Number: 42.127. Copper panel. Height: 15¾ inches; Width: 20⅞ inches. Signed and dated on a bale of goods in the right foreground: *Claudio IV 1643 Roma*. Collection: Barberini, Rome. Reference: Mrs. Mark Pattison, *Claude Lorrain*, 1884, p. 244 (No. 88. Material and condition incorrectly noted). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb, 1942.

²The large ship or carrack which flies the flag of Malta, if one compares it with actual models of contemporary vessels, such as those of Dutch East-Indiamen, "Prins Wellem" (1649) in the Netherlands Marine Museum, Amsterdam, or the "Padmos" (1723) in the Prince Hendrik Maritime Museum, Rotterdam, shows that Claude studied the forms and rigging of seventeenth century ships with affectionate precision. These models are well reproduced in August Koetser, *Ship Models of the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries*, New York, 1926.